



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

MEMORANDUM

To: City Councilors
From: Mayor Miro Weinberger
Date: July 7, 2015
Re: Appointment of Police Chief

I respectfully submit for your consideration and approval Deputy Inspector Brandon del Pozo as the City's new Chief of the Burlington Police Department (BPD), effective September 1, 2015. Del Pozo has served for more than 18 years in the New York Police Department (NYPD) in a variety of roles, and has long-standing connections to Vermont outlined in the memo below. I am requesting City Council approval of this appointment at your July 13, 2015 meeting.

Extensive search for the next Police Chief

Over the past several months, beginning before Chief Michael Schirling's formal announcement of his intention to retire, the search for the next Police Chief has been an important focus of my Administration. The extensive and thorough search process included:

- A community-wide request for input into the skills and qualities required in the next Police Chief. Thoughts and opinions were solicited over email, Front Porch Forum, and at a Community Input Session on April 28, 2015.
- A series of meetings open to all members of the Burlington Police Department, organized by rank so that input could be provided freely. This input, and the feedback from the community and other City employees, contributed to my understanding of the Department's role and future needs.
- Posting the position locally, state-wide, and nationally in April, including targeting diverse communities and supplemental recruitment efforts by my office. The Search Committee maintained a commitment to finding a candidate who would be cognizant of our community's diverse needs and be well-versed in community policing. One of the four finalist candidates identifies as African-American, and two are of Cuban descent.
- Reviewing of resumes and initial interviews of both in-state and out-of-state candidates by the following search committee led by former Mayoral Projects Coordinator Brian Lowe (Lowe was promoted to Chief of Staff effective July 6). I participated in all of the interviews conducted by this Committee in order to gain a better understanding of each candidate:
 - Patrick Brown, Executive Director, Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center

- Dave Clements, President, Burlington Police Officers Association
 - Tris Coffin, former U.S. Attorney
 - Kyle Dodson, East District School Board Commissioner
 - Dave Hartnett, North District City Councilor
 - Andi Higbee, former BPD Deputy Chief
 - Sarah Kenney, Chair, Burlington Police Commission
 - Susan Leonard, Director of Human Resources, City of Burlington (staffed committee)
 - Brian Lowe, Mayoral Projects Coordinator, City of Burlington (staffed committee)
 - Meg Mallet, AFSCME representative at the BPD
 - Amila Merdzanovic, Director of the Vermont Field Office, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program
 - Nyree Miles, Police Commissioner
 - Mary Morrissey, Deputy State's Attorney, Chittenden County
 - Kevin Scully, retired Burlington Police Chief
 - Karen Vastine, Principal Assistant to the Commissioner, Vermont Department of Children and Families, and former Director, Burlington Community Justice Center
- The Search Committee interviewed eight candidates and recommended four finalists. Each finalist met in person for an extended interview with the Search Committee and participated in a series of supplementary interviews with City Councilors, City Department Heads, representatives of the City's Diversity and Equity Core Team (including each non-City member), and representatives from the Howard Center, Spectrum Youth Services, Champlain Housing Trust, the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Chittenden County State's Attorney, and the Burlington Business Association.
 - In addition to joining all the Search Committee's interviews, I subsequently met individually with each candidate to follow up on questions raised during the process.

Now, at the conclusion of this extensive process, I am confident that del Pozo has the character, experience, education, commitment to Burlington, and leadership ability to succeed as the BPD's next Chief.

Del Pozo brings deep command experience + new perspective on public safety challenges

The extensive search process resulted in numerous, qualified internal and external candidates applying for the position. My primary reasons for submitting del Pozo for your confirmation are that he has a more extensive command experience than any other candidate and my belief that his perspective serving a larger City and academic training will serve Burlington well as we address our current challenges.

Del Pozo has had an outstanding career in the NYPD, rising as quickly as any of his peers, and serving in a wide variety of challenging roles. He was a first responder to the attacks at the World Trade Center on 9/11 prior to the structure collapses, served as an intelligence liaison for the NYPD in Amman, Jordan, for two years, and shared the responsibility policing the area that included Zuccotti Park during Occupy Wall Street. Most notably, he was the Commanding Officer of two New York City precincts over the span of four years; both precincts were larger than the BPD. In the NYPD, the Precinct Commander has ultimate policing responsibility for the communities within the precinct's boundaries. From minor offenses and quality of life violations up to the most serious felonies, the Precinct Commander bears the responsibility of delivering results. As Chief James O'Neill, the highest ranking uniformed officer in the 34,000 person NYPD said to me on a reference call, "If being a Precinct Commander doesn't get you ready to be a Chief, I don't know what does."

Further, del Pozo has served in a wide variety of policy roles within the NYPD, and has earned graduate degrees in public administration and criminal justice from the Kennedy School of Government and John Jay College, respectively (He is also a candidate for a doctoral degree in philosophy from the City University of New York, having completed all but his dissertation). As the BPD and the City grapple with our rising opiate and mental health challenges and the 21st Century Policing challenges faced nationwide, del Pozo's extensive and unique background will serve Burlington well.

Del Pozo is committed to public service and Burlington

Del Pozo has been watching the Burlington Police Chief possibility for years, knowing it is a community he would like to serve. The Burlington Police Chief position is the only position outside of the NYPD to which he has applied. He and his wife, Sarah, will be moving to Burlington with their two young sons. Del Pozo has a love of the Green Mountains and a strong connection to Vermont through his service in the National Guard and his family's many trips to Burlington. In del Pozo's cover letter for the Police Chief position, he wrote, "What excites me the most about the position is the possibility of serving a city whose values I share."

A "bridge" between the BPD and the community

In del Pozo's command roles he has consistently focused on supporting those under his command while also building strong relationships between the NYPD and the community it serves. Del Pozo stated to the Search Committee his belief that the Chief should serve as a bridge between the Police Department and the wider community, able to translate the sometimes competing needs, requirements, and constraints to all parties.

Del Pozo understands well the pressures faced by all of our uniformed officers. He spent five years as a patrol officer in Brooklyn where he effected arrests for many serious offenses, performed fire rescues, and rendered childbirth assistance. As he was promoted steadily through the ranks of the NYPD, del Pozo continued to spend considerable time on the street in order to understand the challenges his officers were facing, and he intends to continue that practice as Burlington's Chief.

At the same time, del Pozo has demonstrated a commitment to understanding the communities he worked. Del Pozo also presently oversees a training model that attaches every rookie officer to a group of community leaders in the neighborhood he or she is newly assigned to police. These relationships allow the new officers to see the community through a different set of eyes, to learn the rhythms and personalities of the area, and to have a readily available source of advice or mediation. As our City becomes increasingly diverse, such an approach in Burlington could help build on and institutionalize the community ties that Chief Schirling worked so hard to develop.

Del Pozo commanded the NYPD's sixth precinct, which covers the West Village. The relationships he developed there led him to change police practices in a way that better served residents of that precinct. For example, following periodic meetings with FIERCE – a group that advocates for LGBTQ youth of color – in 2012 del Pozo changed the classification of condoms to personal property, rather than evidence, for his precinct. By eliminating the possibility that condoms could be used as evidence, he removed a fear that those involved in prostitution had about carrying condoms with them. In del Pozo's view, this population was "better served by the type of outreach that FIERCE and other organizations provided than by early induction into the criminal justice system." Two years after del Pozo made this change, the NYPD as a whole adopted the new policy.

Background managing relationship between academic institutions + the larger community

At the NYPD, del Pozo commanded precincts that covered New York University, the New School University, and Manhattan College. The experience directing police coverage of those areas taught him the value this sort of academic institution can bring to a City, the need for a close and honest relationship between campus police and the NYPD so that norms and expectations are consistent for students while on or off campus, and that students and faculty can enjoy a secure environment. This experience should give del Pozo an ability to support and improve the City's long-standing efforts to address quality of life issues in our City's historic neighborhoods.

Philosophy of policing

We are in the midst of an important and difficult national conversation about the future of policing in America and what changes to our practices are needed. This challenge was perhaps best captured in the recent report by President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The BPD, with its long-standing commitments to community policing and public engagement, is well ahead of most communities in addressing this challenge. However, as in all American cities, we have more work to do to protect public safety and maintain public trust in the years ahead. With del Pozo, I am confident that we have found an individual who has thought deeply about the challenge of providing public safety while prioritizing and protecting the rights of our residents. The following excerpt from his cover letter provides the foundation for del Pozo's approach to policing a diverse community with many different visions of a life well-lived:

"This is my philosophy: The police create practical justice for citizens in many ways. One of the more obvious ones is by ensuring public safety. Another is by brokering the fair terms of social cooperation as people pursue their diverse conceptions of a good life. Ideas about how to best live can come into conflict in large and small ways, without any of them being wrong. They affect how we use our public spaces, what expectations we have of each other, and how we personally behave. The police enforce cooperation when conflicts result, but they have to do so using reasons that treat all citizens involved as equals."

Going forward

Further details of del Pozo's impressive career can be found in his attached resume and cover letter for the Police Chief position in Burlington. Following your confirmation of del Pozo's appointment, I intend to place him at Step 7 of the Police Chief pay scale for an annual compensation of \$114,363 in FY16.

Del Pozo is an innovative thinker, a strong advocate of community engagement, and a dedicated police officer. I believe he will make an outstanding Police Chief and will be an accessible, open, and trusted member of the City's leadership team.

Thank you for your consideration.